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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [SL](#) [HR](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: NATO/CROATIA: GERMANY PRESSING THE SLOVENES AT
THE HIGHEST LEVELS TO FIND A SOLUTION

REF: STATE 20395

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Post delivered reftel points to Foreign Office DAS-equivalent Emily Haber and MFA NATO Enlargement officer Ludwig Blaurock and asked that Germany weigh in with the Slovenians to encourage them to find a legal way to truncate the referendum process so that they can deposit their instrument of ratification for Croatia's accession by no later than April 2.

¶2. (C) Haber told POL M-C that she was in the process of finalizing papers for Chancellor Merkel's March 17 meeting with Slovene PM Pahor in Berlin. She said Merkel would make the following main points: Croatia's NATO accession is a matter of the highest priority; Germany has a particular interest in this as co-host of the NATO Summit and supporter of Croatian accession; it would be an unacceptable failure and embarrassment if Croatian accession were held up by Slovenia; and it is Slovenia's responsibility to find a way to solve the problem, rather than simply explaining the difficulties that led to the current situation. Haber noted that, in addition to Chancellor Merkel's meeting with PM Pahor, Foreign Minister Steinmeier would be prepared to raise the matter with FM Zbogor on the margins of the March 16-17 GAERC.

¶3. (C) Blaurock said that Germany shared the U.S. concern about this matter and that both Chancellor Merkel and FM Steinmeier had already emphasized to their respective Slovenian counterparts the importance of resolving the referendum question so that Slovenia can deposit its instrument of ratification on a timely basis. Blaurock noted that indications are so far that the petition drive will fail -- reportedly only about 1,000 of the 40,000 necessary signatures have been collected. He agreed, however, that the Slovenian government could not afford to let the normal referendum process play out since that would allow referendum organizers to delay delivering their collected signatures until April 2.

¶4. (C) Blaurock was critical of the Slovene government for having "played with fire" by waiting so long to begin its ratification process, and indicated that both the Chancellor and FM Steinmeier have used this argument to stress to the Slovenes that they had a responsibility to make sure this turned out right. Slovenia had to do whatever was legally and politically possible to resolve this matter so that Croatia could participate in the April 3-4 NATO Summit as a full member. While Germany will continue to exert diplomatic pressure on Slovenia behind the scenes, Blaurock said it thought it would be counterproductive for Germany to make public overtures or to be seen assisting the Slovene government in its public diplomacy campaign.

¶5. (C) In a separate conversation, post spoke with Claas Koenig in the MFA's Western Balkans Division, who echoed a number of Blaurock's comments. Koenig also mentioned that

the German Embassy in Ljubljana delivered a "clear" demarche to the Slovene government on February 17 with the message "resolve this issue between you, quickly; we fully expect a successful NATO Summit." As Koenig noted, "This is our Summit too, after all."

Koenig